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ABSTRACT

The role of pragmatic particles such as "you know," "I guess," and "man," which occur primarily in spontaneous speech are examined. Pragmatic particles and impromptu speech are defined in terms of prototypes and the social and cognitive causes for the two phenomena are discussed. A distinction is made between core and peripheral pragmatic particles, and the concept of impromptu speech is extended beyond spoken language. The analysis finds impromptu speech and pragmatic particles to be influenced by the same psychosocial causes, planning and politeness, and to have a close surface relationship in terms of cooccurrence, characterized as symbiotic. (MSE)

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THE SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRAGMATIC PARTICLES AND IMPROMPTU SPEECH

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The symbiotic relationship between pragmatic particles and impromptu speech

Abstract. Pragmatic particles are given a universal prototype definition on the basis of structural and functional criteria. A distinction is made between core and peripheral pragmatic particles. Impromptu speech is not restricted to the spoken medium. The concept is given a multidimensional characterization in terms of situational variables, interactive discourse parameters, and manner of grammatical realization. Notions like deviance and norm are reinterpreted with respect to these different levels. Impromptu speech and pragmatic particles are found to be influenced by the same socio-psychological causes: planning and politeness. Impromptu speech and pragmatic particles also show a close relationship on the surface; this relationship is investigated in terms of implicational relations of cooccurrence. Using a biological metaphor, the close relationship between impromptu speech and pragmatic particles is characterized as a symbiotic relationship.

1. Introduction

The starting point for the present paper is the often attested fact that PRAGMATIC PARTICLES like *you know*, *I guess*, and *man* mostly occur in IMPROMPTU SPEECH, i.e., in spontaneous, every-day face-to-face interaction. In fact, the very object of the study is to discuss this special relationship between pragmatic particles and impromptu speech in some detail. If pragmatic particles occur most often in impromptu speech, then, by scrutinizing the whole notion of impromptu speech, we will also get important insights into the functions of pragmatic particles in language.

The task of pragmatic particles in language can be investigated from different points of view; most importantly, we can distinguish between a WHAT question, and a WHY question. The former will focus on the structure

of language, and seeks to explain the pragmatic-particle phenomenon with respect to linguistic units and hierarchies, as well as with respect to the task of pragmatic particles in narrative and turn-taking structures. The WHY perspective concentrates more on discourse-functional aspects of language, and will attempt to answer the question via an investigation into the cognitive and interactional behaviour of human beings.

For general linguistic purposes, both of these perspectives are of course equally relevant.

In a more general sense, the paper also attempts to shed some light on what a universal characterization of pragmatic particles might look like. Such a universalist approach to pragmatic particles may need some clarifications: functionally, pragmatic particles as a group are viewed as performing the same functions irrespective of specific language; and structurally, I want to argue (a) that there is a similarity between their surface-linguistic features in different languages, and (b) that one particle or set of particles in one language might have a functionally corresponding particle or set of particles (not necessarily in one-to-one correspondence group-internally) in another language. This suggests the methodological possibility (c) that each pragmatic particle has a prototype meaning or function of its own, a function that is independent of, and that can be extracted from, its occurrence in whatever medium or register. This, again, would imply that a prototypical characterization of pragmatic particles can be arrived at without explicit reference to, say, impromptu speech. However, in our search for such a characterization for each pragmatic particle, the prototypical whereabouts of pragmatic particles, viz. impromptu speech, will at the same time receive a deeper understanding.

We accordingly find that by looking at impromptu speech we will learn about pragmatic particles, and by looking at pragmatic particles we will learn about impromptu speech. And this is of course the way natural language works: things interrelate; and they affect and define each other, simultaneously.

It does not, however, follow that, because pragmatic particles and impromptu speech do in fact interrelate considerably, their relationship should necessarily be a simple one. As I hope to show below, they are at the same time independent of each other as they show superficial dependency; and

they are both partly effects of deeper, mutual causes which functionally connect them.

*

In section 2. I will suggest a prototypical definition of pragmatic particles; in section 3. a similar endeavour is undertaken with respect to impromptu speech. In section 4. I will discuss the social and cognitive causes for the two phenomena, and in section 5. the close relationship – on the surface – between pragmatic particles and impromptu speech is illustrated. The concluding section will employ a biological metaphor to characterize their relationship.

2. *A universal characterization of pragmatic particles.*[1]

In accordance with the universal perspective suggested in section 1., I will start by distinguishing between a structural (WHAT) and a functional (WHY) approach to pragmatic particles.

2.1. The structural approach takes a language-internal perspective, and is closely associated with attempts to set up and define word classes or parts of speech. Thus, we might set as our task to isolate a sub-class of pragmatic particles within the more general class of non-inflected particles (in the traditional sense of this term: adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions, interjections, etc.).

Typically, a pragmatic particle would be (a) short, and (b) prosodically subordinated to another word. It would (c) resist clear lexical specification and be propositionally empty (i.e., it would not be part of the propositional content of the sentence). Furthermore, it would (d) tend to occur in some sense cut off from, or on a higher level than, the rest of the utterance, at the same time as it tends to modify that utterance as a whole.

Perhaps these criteria alone will satisfy some readers as a characterization of a potential part-of-speech class of pragmatic particles. However, when we attempt to apply these criteria in practice, problems emerge. Firstly, some of these criteria are very idiosyncratic in comparison to existing word-class criteria. This is especially the case with the specification of item length.

Secondly, we will encounter problems of delimitation: a formally defined class of pragmatic particles will overlap with other classes, notably with other sub-classes of the traditional class of particles (cf. 2.3.).

Thirdly, there are elements in language that seem to function in the same way as pragmatic particles, but whose structural make-up does not conform to all of the criteria given above. (Most of these will, however, turn out to be peripheral pragmatic particles; cf. 2.3.)

Perhaps we could weigh criteria (a) - (d) above, and ascribe more importance to some than to others. In that case the propositional-emptiness criterion will no doubt prove to be more important than the others. However, propositional emptiness is also a relative concept. All of this suggests that we have to define pragmatic particles structurally as a prototype concept, with criteria (a) - (d) as the relevant parameters in the prototype.

Still, if we look at the criteria above, we find that they are mentioned in the order of, if you like, from surface to deep. And the deeper you get, the more obligatory the criteria get; cf. (c) and (d). But at the same time, the deeper you get, the further you also get from purely structural characterizations, and the closer you come to the functional perspective of WHY pragmatic particles are used in language.

The word-class approach – in its traditional sense – does not seem to be able to take us very far. Still, a recent approach to these issues turns out to be methodologically very similar to the traditional word-class approach. I have in mind research within the ethnomethodology of speaking, where the structural turn-taking systems are discourse-level structures, but still very much rely on actually occurring surface-structure organization. Within this system pragmatic particles are often being classified on, e.g., positional grounds, and we find sub-classes like post-completers, and prestarters (Sacks *et al.* 1974).[2] Similarly, in structural approaches to narratology, pragmatic particles can be classified as episode markers, organizers, or connectives.

We notice, then, that there are two kinds of architectures that pragmatic particles can assist in building up: a clausal one and a textual one. If, say, a pragmatic particle like *I guess* is used in an utterance to qualify the speaker's certainty towards his statement, this particle focuses on clause-level architecture. On a textual level, pragmatic particles focus on the relation of one utterance/text/turn to another. In conversations we have turn-taking signals (*oh, well*), in narratives we get episode markers (e.g. the pragmatic use

of *anyway*), and connectives (e.g., conjunctions used pragmatically). The two kinds of architectures are presented schematically in Fig. 1.

Clause-level:

$$(_{\text{text}}\ \text{pragmatic particle}\ (_{\text{proposition}}\ )\ )$$

Textual level:

$$(_{\text{text}_i}\ )\ \text{pragmatic particle}\ (_{\text{text}_j}\ )$$

Fig. 1. The clause-level and textual qualifications of pragmatic particles.

2.2. As we turn to the pragmatic, or functional aspect of pragmatic particles, we no longer look at language as a structural entity; rather, we look at language from the point of view of how it relates to other areas of human behaviour. We can thus start by comparing the functions of pragmatic particles to other linguistic and non-linguistic means for communicating pragmatic information.

It has often been pointed out that pragmatic particles share a number of characteristics with certain aspects of prosody. Most often this comparison has been made across languages (cf. Schubiger 1965, 1980, Kriwonossow 1977, Weydt 1979, Östman 1979), but the similarity in function is naturally also present within one language. In particular, the similarity between pragmatic particles and paralinguistic features has been noted in Schubiger 1965; Abercrombie's (1967) distinction between speech melody, and vocal gesture used as an affective index, is also relevant here. And from vocal gesture to non-vocal there is but a short step.

Going in another direction, we can note the similarity between pragmatic particles and modals, and the pragmatic functions of tense and aspect, word order, passivization, etc.

What, then, do pragmatic particles have in common with these other phenomena? Three aspects, I would like to argue: anchoring, implicitness, and expressiveness. An expressive element of language communicates the emotions and attitudes of the speaker, and by so doing, establishes a con-

nection with the addressee. Pragmatic particles, prosody, gestures, and certain grammatical devices implicitly anchor the act of communication to the speaker's attitudes towards aspects of the on-going interaction. This phenomenon is what I have elsewehere discussed as IMPLICIT ANCHORAGE (cf. Östman 1981). Implicit anchorage constitutes a multidimensional conceptual field, whose linguistic manifestations include pragmatic particles.

A functional characterization of pragmatic particles would thus involve relating it to the field of implicit anchorage. A pragmatic particle can now be defined as an element of language that formally satisfies (at least some of) the criteria discussed under 2.1., and that functionally is a manifestation of implicit anchorage.

I mentioned that pragmatic particles have two types of architectural tasks, a clausal one and a textual one. On the functional side pragmatic particles also perform two types of tasks: an interactional and an attitudinal task. The interactional functions of pragmatic particles are either sociological in nature, e.g. group identificatory (sex, age, ethnicity; cf. the use of *you know*, *like*, and *man*), or they are discourse-functional (e.g. *you know*) and give important cues in the on-going interaction (the implied functional side of the ethnomethodological approach). The attitudinal functions of pragmatic particles focus on cognitive and psychological aspects, and are realized e.g. as evaluative markers and expletives (cf. the pragmatic use of *fuck* and *shit*). (Reflex--interjective elements like *ouch*, and sound effects like *booing* are not regarded as pragmatic particles.)

In their functional use pragmatic particles are not restricted as to their position in a discourse; they can be dispersed throughout the text (cf. the evaluative elements in narratives, as discussed in Labov 1972).

2.3. In the preceding sections I have differentiated between two structural and two functional aspects of pragmatic particles. Notice that these aspects do not constitute a sub-classification of pragmatic particles. All pragmatic particles potentially rely on all of these aspects in discourse. And this is why we do not talk about clausal, textual, attitudinal, or interactional pragmatic particles as a separate sub-classes.

It is true, however, that the pragmatic particles both can have, and do have, any one (or several) of these aspects IN FOCUS. For instance, *I guess* has the clausal aspect in focus (cf. its close relation to the epistemic – and

peripheral, cf. below – particles *I suppose*, and *I believe*). *You know*, on the other hand, has the interactional aspect in focus, but it also has an important textual usage.

It should be obvious that both the structural and the functional perspectives are necessary for an overall characterization of pragmatic particles. Without the functional characterization pragmatic particles would be reduced to little more than an extremely-hard-to-define word-class; without the structural delimitation pragmatic particles could not be distinguished from implicit anchoring performed by gestural or prosodic means, nor from any verbal element (phrase, utterance, text) that on a particular occasion happens to have an expressive function.

There is, however, one further criterion that has to be added to the ones already discussed. We need a 'uniqueness' criterion for the pragmatic particles. With this in mind we can suggest as the ultimate delimiting criteria for calling a linguistic unit a prototypical pragmatic particle (a) that this unit does not directly partake in the propositional content of an utterance; and (b) that it has as its SOLE FUNCTION to implicitly anchor that propositional content.

Sole function here means that for an item to be called a pragmatic particle, it should never be able to have any other than a pragmatic-particle function; it is always an instance of the class of pragmatic particles independent of where it occurs. Two clarifications are in need at this point.

a. This definition of pragmatic particles will exclude from the CORE class of pragmatic particles such expressions as can (but need not always) have a pragmatic-particle function (e.g., aspectual particles like *just*), and whose pragmatic-particle function is not clearly delimited from its propositional meaning. Such particles can be called PERIPHERAL members of the class of pragmatic particles. Other examples of peripheral pragmatic particles would be: aspectual particles: *now*, *too*; hedges: *kinda*; conjunctive particles: *but*; modal particles: *I suppose*, *maybe*; etc. (cf. Östman, forthcoming, for a tentative list and classification).

b. The core, or prototypical pragmatic particles can still have homonyms which have a clear propositional content. But in this case the pragmatic and propositional functions are clearly separate in nature, with no scalar

relation between the two. This status of homonymity is basically what is being made use of in a joke like the following

(1) A: You know, yesterday I really enjoyed myself!
B: No I don't, actually.

(In this connection we can also mention a possible distinction between what we could call – following a suggestion by Jaakko Lehtonen – communicative vs. informative pragmatic particles. The main function of the latter would be to transmit (unintentional) information about the speaker rather than to partake in the communicative interaction as such. However, these are different functions that the same verbal elements can perform, and the distinction between them will very often be of a gradient nature.)

On the basis of the suggestions in the previous paragraphs, we can characterize the class of pragmatic particles as a pseudo-open class: the core members are relatively few (at least the following: *I mean, you know, like, well, oh, ah, uh, say, blood, man, I guess*), but pragmatic-particleness is 'peripherally' dispersed in various directions.

3. Impromptu speech.[3]

3.1. When characterizing impromptu speech, it is methodologically important to realize that this notion can be approached from different directions. Impromptu speech is a discourse type whose core feature is that it characterizes on-the-spot-created language[4] that is to be processed in real time; the prototypical instance being spontaneous, every-day face-to-face interaction. This means that a characterization of impromptu speech will have to focus more on the cognitive and interactional processes involved, than on the ultimate linguistic product. Impromptu speech is, in this view, a different system of INTERACTION than, say, expository prose, on which grammatical descriptions of particular languages are often based. And impromptu language will accordingly conform to a grammar of its own. Impromptu speech is not, however, a separate LINGUISTIC system: there can be more or less impromtuness in any discourse, and the relation between prototypical impromptu

speech and prototypical non-impromptu speech is that of a linguistic gradience.

The concept of impromptu speech should not be restricted to instances of spoken discourse, as the label may suggest, nor should we a priori discard as non-impromptu speech instances of language that (more or less efficiently) SIMULATE on-the-spot-created language. After all, we do recognize impromptu-speech simulations as impromptu speech, in relation to other (present or potential) types of discourse; they may be idealizations of real-time language ('displaced impromptu speech'), but once we realize that this is the case, they can just as much assist the impromptu-speech researcher, as they can (and inevitably do at times) obstruct his investigations.

We can also recognize different extents of displacedness with respect to authentic impromptu speech. Each of the following 'idealizations' stresses different aspects of the artificiality of any strict delimitation of impromptu speech with respect to medium and authenticity.

i. Transcriptions of impromptu speech.
ii. Insincere impromptu performances. E.g., a political discussion with memorized impromptu turns, especially replies.
iii. What I have elsewhere called INTERACTIONAL WRITING: impromptu conversations carried on in writing (cf. Östman MS2).
iv. Simulation of impromptu speech in drama or fiction. This is perhaps the clearest instance of intentional simulation. However, as I have shown in Östman, forthcoming, simple simulation or replication of authentic discourse is just one of the uses of fictional impromptu speech.

3.2. Impromptu speech is not something that is definable once and for all in a vacuum. Impromptu speech is a bundle-concept. A particular instance of impromptu speech will look different (in its syntactic and textual organization) depending on the values-at-hand of the following situational parameters:

- the CONTEXT-OF-SITUATION (cf. Firth 1935, and modifications in Östman 1978): the linguistic frame (cf. Fillmore 1977) and its relevant participants, their roles, number and sex, together with temporally and spatially relevant objects.

- the MEDIUM: spoken, written, telecommunication. Notice that writing cannot simply be regarded as secondary to and derivative of speaking.
- the TOPIC, or subject-matter of the discourse, including the possibly predetermined structure, stylistic boundedness, of a text, and participants' general PREPAREDNESS with respect to this topic. (Cf. Nils Erik Enkvist's paper in the present volume.) The latter, preparedness, is what Chafe (1979) calls planned[5] discourse. Chafe regards preparedness and medium as the basic parameters in his research on the difference between spoken and written discourse. The prototypical types of discourse that Chafe has chosen for each slot in his two-dimensional grid are given in Fig. 2.[6]

	PLANNED	UNPLANNED
SPOKEN	lecture	conversation
WRITTEN	scientific article	letter

Fig. 2.

In this approach, situation A involving medium X and topic Y will manifest a different kind of impromptu speech than situation B in medium Z, concerning topic W. Still, both would be prototypical instances of impromptu speech.

In the same way as we can distinguish between interactive and linguistic systems (cf. 3.1.), we should also differentiate between linguistic and interactive (or pragmatic) NORMS with respect to impromptu speech. That is, from an interactive point of view we can use the label 'norm' for prototypical instances of impromptu speech with respect to the situational variables mentioned above. As we noted in 3.1., the interactive system of impromptu speech has its own rules and pragmatic organization.

In a linguistic sense we can talk about norms (or rules, or tendencies) from the point of view of a common-core approach to language variety. And in this sense we can also talk about impromptu speech as being grammatically FRAGMENTED (cf. Chafe 1979: fragmentation; cf. also 3.3.) and often syntactically DEVIANT in relation to non-impromptu, common-core language.

Notice in this connection that Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle and its maxims are not interactive norms. Rather, they constitute the norms for how non-impromptu speech should be used – if it ever is used. Thus, when we talk about 'violations of, or deviations from, the Gricean maxims', such violations may be realized as grammatical deviance, but interactively the state of affairs may, and very often will, remain normal (cf. also section 5.).

3.3. The preceding sections were concerned with the essence of impromptu speech. But, as pointed out in 3.1., impromptu speech has to be approached with different perspectives. One very important perspective is the question of how impromptuness is linguistically manifested in a discourse.

It has been noted, for instance, that impromptu speech – due to cognitive and interactive constraints – is generally characterized by a 'looser' or more fragmented structure (both syntactically and textually) than non-impromptu speech: coordinations rather than embeddings, syntactic simplifications due to focus on content rather than expression, redundancy, etc.

The values of the parameters of context-of-situation, medium, and topic tendentially (i.e. probabilistically) suggest whether a piece of discourse is, or is not, potentially impromptu; we could call this a STYLISTIC or SITUATIONAL determination. But on a different level, let us call it the REGISTER[7] level, we can distinguish a number of variables that determine the actual degree of impromptuness for any given discourse, in any given type of situation. These variables (or, rather, what I take to be these variables) have been extensively discussed by Robin T. Lakoff, forthcoming – from a somewhat different point of view, viz., as dimensions of spoken and written discourse.

Lakoff sets up a gradience with two end-points: the oral dyad as one end-pole, and expository prose as the other. A set of variables determines whether a piece of text is closer to one or the other of the end-poles, or whether it lies somewhere in the middle on this gradient scale. In this system discourse types like telephone conversation, lecture, and letter show different prototypical feature combinations vis-à-vis these parameters. Fig. 3 is an adaptation from Lakoff (forthcoming).[8]

The variables to the left in Fig. 3. determine the degree of impromptuness of a discourse: visibility; reciprocity ("interchangeability of roles"); informality (non-ceremonial); spontaneity (unplanned, feedback); empathy (communication as a joint endeavour, back-channel responses); and inconsequentiality

(no import beyond immediate context of discourse). Impromptuness corresponds to 'plus' features. Thus, the most impromptuness will be found to the left in Fig. 3.: the more a particular type of discourse approaches the oral-dyad end-point, the more impromptu it will be.

	oral-dyad	telephone	lecture	letter	prose
visibility	+	–	+	–	–
reciprocity	+	+	–	+	–
informality	+	+	–	+/–	–
spontaneity	+	+	–	–	–
empathy	+	+	+	–	–
inconsequentiality	+	+	+	+/–	–

Fig. 3.

The plus and minus in Fig. 3. can be read as facilitating vs. obstructing the occurrence of syntactically deviant structures, respectively. But perceptually, the presence of visibility, spontaneity, etc. will of course facilitate mutual understanding between the participants.

A somewhat similar approach to this general field of research can be found in Wallace L. Chafe's (1979) recent discussions. Chafe sets up a gradience DETACHMENT- INVOLVEMENT, which parallels, basically, the minus - plus distinction, respectively, of Fig. 3. But Chafe also makes a gradient distinction in terms of the linguistic aspects of the product; between FRAGMENTATION ('loose' structure) and INTEGRATION ('tight' and non-redundant structure). Furthermore, Chafe argues that each text can be characterized by plotting it onto the area that emerges when these two scales are made to cross one another, as in Fig. 4. Given a particular text, a number of linguistic parameters are isolated (the use of conjunctions, hedges, hesitations, certain syntactic structures, etc.) and are given a frequency value for that text. The added values of the parameters for the whole text with respect to the axes in Fig. 4. will ensure this text a specific place in one of the fields of the figure (e.g. Text A in the upper right-hand field).

From a strictly theoretical point of view the axes seem to represent different ways of looking at the same phenomenon. The x-axis in Fig. 4.is concerned with functional, cognitive, and causal notions: the y-axis with structural, verbal, and resultative notions. However, there are also good reasons for keeping them distinct, as a heuristic device. For instance, they shed an important light on useful discourse-type distinctions; and a further reason for keeping them apart will be illustrated in section 4.

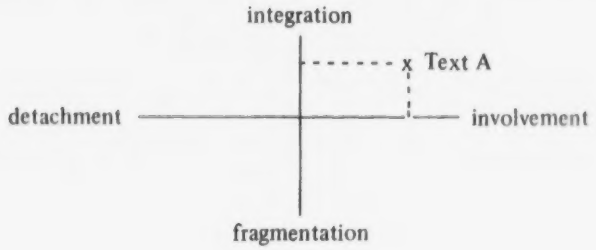

Fig. 4.

In Chafe's system syntactic deviance will be more probable to occur in texts with a high value of fragmentation; and involvement relates (in the same way as Lakoff's variables) to perceptual easiness of understanding a discourse. (This, too, can be seen as an argument for keeping Chafe's axes apart.)

3.4. The discussion above has shown that a notion like impromptu speech is, to say the least, amoebic, and that in order to arrive at an over-all picture, we have to approach impromptu speech from different perspectives simultaneously.

We can end the discussion of impromptu speech with a schematic figure – Fig. 5. – of the different aspects that have to be taken into account in characterizing impromptu speech.

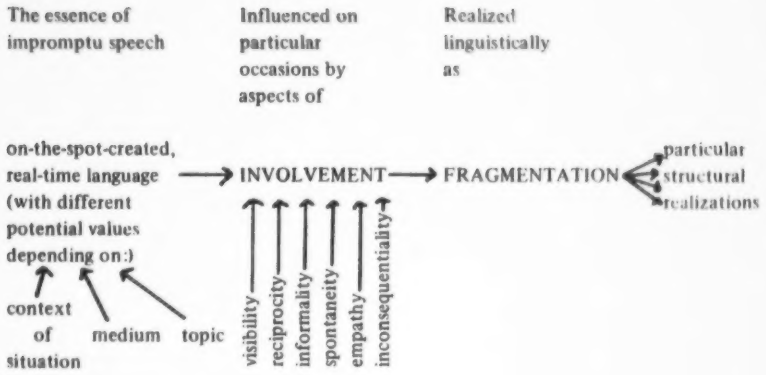

Fig. 5.
The interrelation between the different aspects that partake in the characterization of impromptu speech.

4. The socio-psychological functions of pragmatic particles and impromptu speech.

4.1. In the characterization of pragmatic particles in section 2. no (explicit) reference was made to impromptu speech. And similarly, we did not need to mention pragmatic particles when we discussed the characteristics of impromptu speech. Nevertheless, it is true that pragmatic particles occur very frequently in spontaneous, face-to-face interaction.

I now want to look at the interrelationship between pragmatic particles and impromptu speech in more detail. In this section I will discuss the underlying reason for this intricate relationship. When we deal with matters that are specifically related to actual language USAGE, like pragmatic particles and impromptu speech, it is important not to forget the point of view of general human behaviour. What we need to investigate in pragmatic discussions are, on top of internal linguistic causes and cooccurrences, the socio-psychological causes and processes that lie behind the resulting communicative (especially linguistic) output.

Whereas this section will thus be a discussion in terms of functional causality, section 5. will concentrate on linguistic issues of causality: whether

the occurrence of one of these phenomena, pragmatic particles and impromptu speech, is dependent on the occurrence of the other; that is, whether there is, after all, some implicational relation between the two.

*

In characterizing pragmatic particles and impromptu speech (in 2. and 3.) we found

a. that a description of pragmatic particles in terms of autonomous grammar is not enough, and that functional aspects – socially and psychologically underlying causes – have to be adhered to; and

b. that impromptu speech is not a clearly defined entity, but a bundle-concept, which can be appropriately characterized only by reference to a number of variables on different levels.

Below I will be claiming that the underlying factors that produce both pragmatic particles and impromptu speech are of a similar nature.

There are two basic aspects that govern both the occurrence of pragmatic particles in discourse, and the impromptu nature of certain speech situations and discourse-types: PLANNING and POLITENESS. The former is speaker--oriented and directly affects both the content and the form of the resulting utterance; the latter is interaction-oriented, and its effects (both on content and form) can be seen as being more indirect accomplishments, or secondary--level modifications, from a behavioural point of view.

4.2. Planning in the present sense should be distinguished from what we called preparedness in section 3. The latter is a more general notion which relates to the speaker's general state of mind in the situation at hand. (With respect to a certain situation or topic the speaker might for instance have some prior idea of what aspects are to be discussed and in what order.) The former notion, planning, is here used in a more local sense: the (psychological, not physical) problems the speaker has with grammatical planning, of both content and form.

The fact that impromptu speech is characteristically connected with real-time processing does not by itself make time a causal notion for impromptu speech. Rather, time can be seen as a circumstantial aspect that makes planning take the linguistic and interactional form it does. To put it in a rather extreme way: we would have to plan even if there were no time, but the fact that time exists makes us plan the way we do: the more time we have, the more planning can be undertaken, the less time, the less planning, and the less planning, the more impromptu.

Thus planning, or rather, the interaction between planning and time can be seen to be a more important factor for impromptu speech than time alone.

Pragmatic particles appear in discourse as a reflection of planning. The speaker can, of course, plan his utterances silently (as linguistically revealed through pauses),[9] but to ensure that his pauses are not mistaken for 'transition-relevance places', he can hold the floor by using the appropriate pragmatic particle (note the use of labels like 'hesitation markers', and 'pause-fillers'): *you know, I mean, well, like, uh,* etc. As has been shown in a number of studies, the use of each of these pragmatic particles is governed by rules, and there are reasons for using one pragmatic particle rather than any other (cf. James 1973; R. Lakoff 1973; Östman 1981). In Chafe's terms, their occurrence indicates fragmentation of the text. (The planning-hesitation function of pragmatic particles has mainly to do with their structural aspects; cf. 2.1.)

Thus, planning shows up both as an underlying factor governing impromptu speech, and as one of the reasons for using a pragmatic particle in a discourse. Fig. 6. shows the effects of planning.

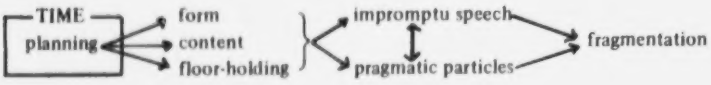

Fig. 6.

4.3 Politeness is the other important factor in discourse that produces pragmatic particles and impromptu speech. Whereas planning focuses on the cognitive aspects of human linguistic behaviour, politeness is an interactive

and social notion. (The term politeness is here used in a general sense, including, rather than being in opposition to, notions like rudeness.)

There are two interrelated aspects that have to do with politeness. The first is the dichotomy between POWER and SOLIDARITY (or I vs. WE): the two counterbalancing forces that tend to restrict the behaviour of a speaker to what is socially and situationally acceptable, while at the same time allowing him to save face in the presence of his interlocutor(s) (cf. the discussion of face-saving and politeness in Östman 1981).

The second aspect constitutes the different politeness strategies any of which a speaker can choose to follow in an interaction: CLARITY (impersonal), DISTANCE (formal politeness: designed to impute authority), DEFERENCE ('Don't impose – give options'), CAMARADERIE ('Show sympathy') (cf. R. Lakoff 1979).

At the level of clarity Grice's maxims are operative, and it is agreed that transmission of information is the sole enterprise of the interaction, seemingly setting aside issues of power and solidarity. Of course, these issues are not as such neglected, it is only their socially preferable parallel existence that is overlooked, and the aspect of power is let loose without constraints.

At the opposite end of R. Lakoff's hierarchy of politeness strategies we have camaraderie. Here too, the power-solidarity opposition is ideally not operative, but a one-sided focus on solidarity is typical. In an extreme version of camaraderie the Gricean maxims also become operative: there is no social need for the participants to use strategies that do not conform to the Gricean maxims. Their amount of shared knowledge is at a maximum.[10]

When the Gricean maxims do not apply, the aspects of power and solidarity are simultaneously operative – as they should be. In these non-extreme, 'normal' situations, and especially at the levels of distance and deference, conversational INDIRECTNESS (R. Lakoff 1980) will show up in the discourse. Conversational indirectness is employed as a strategy to mitigate the effect of an utterance, and thus to avoid confrontation. Linguistically such confrontation avoidance is typically realized as discourse-regulating hedginess. And pragmatic particles play a salient role in the linguistic field of hedges.

A speaker's indirectness strategy gives the resultant text a feeling of impromptu.[11] And indirectness shows up in the use of hedges and pragmatic particles. (This is mainly an instance of the functional aspect of pragmatic

particles, cf. 2.2., where features of involvement and reciprocity are in the foreground.)

Whereas planning is more paradigmatically oriented (choice of content or word-form), politeness has a syntagmatic orientation: elements have to be checked, and monitored for the sake of the addressee – both before they are, and after they have been, temporally emitted.

Fig. 7. is a schematic representation of the causal effect of politeness. Notice that the end-result here is involvement, whereas in Fig. 6. it was fragmentation; this, again, speaks in favour of keeping Chafe's axes apart.

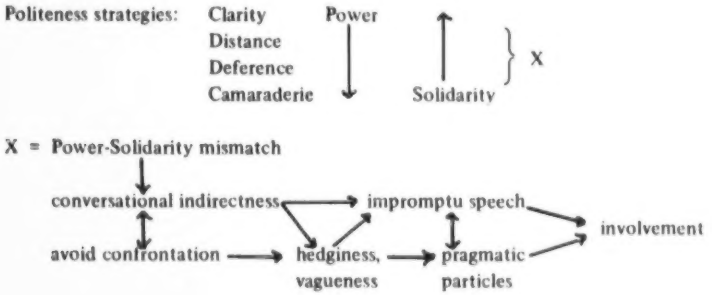

Fig. 7.

*

In this section I have shown that the relation between pragmatic particles and impromptu speech is deeper than what has usually been thought. In a sense, pragmatic particles and impromptu speech are effects of the same causes. This is of course an oversimplified statement, since the two are not parallel phenomena, but one occurs as part of the other. However, the primary reason why we use pragmatic particles is not the impromptu nature of the discourse as such, but that the kind of discourse we might expect to find pragmatic particles in is itself typical of the social situations where the need for pragmatic particles is the greatest.

But even though pragmatic particles and impromptu speech might be regarded as effects of similar causes, they do not simply occur side by side; as will be evident from the discussion in the next section, they very closely interact in making a message interpretable in the way the speaker intended.

5. The surface interaction between pragmatic particles and impromptu speech.

In the preceding sections we have seen that pragmatic particles and impromptu speech have, to employ a botanic metaphor, a common root, but that they still are different plants on the surface. In this section I want to discuss the very intricate surface relations between impromptu speech and pragmatic particles. The discussion will be in terms of cooccurrence (in-)dependencies: is their an implicational relation between an occurrence of a pragmatic particle and the impromptuness of the discourse?

5.1. One line of approach is to argue that impromptu speech is, partly at least, created by the occurrence of pragmatic particles. Or, to make the statement more plausible, the occurrence of pragmatic particles in a discourse implies that the discourse is of an impromptu nature.

This argument could be made in two steps. First, the occurrence of a pragmatic particle in an utterance often interrupts the grammatical flow of the utterance, and consequently a grammatically fragmented, and very often a grammatically deviant sentence is created. Secondly, fragmentation and deviance imply impromptu. Thus, the occurrence of pragmatic particles in a discourse would imply that this is an impromptu discourse.

Let us first look at the second premise of the argument.

Intuitively, concepts like PAROLE and PERFORMANCE are intimately associated with impromptu. Grammatical discussions of performance have mainly (though not of course only) focused on aspects of syntax, so that flaws in the syntax of utterances of ordinary conversation have been attributed to the individual speaker's temporary failure to adher to the grammatical rules – for whatever social or psychological reasons.

Does deviant syntax, then, imply impromptu? And, taking the argument a step further: is syntactic deviance a necessary requirement for impromptu?

It is true, of course, that surface errors are common in the syntax of everyday discourse, cf. e.g. (2).

(2) Yeah I remember like I have a memory of when I was a KID . . . uh say at Christmas time like all of a sudded realizing that I had MISJUDGed the level of . . . expression of happiness that I was . . . giving in the sense that ah . . . all of a sudded I realized that . . .

(BER81-JO23-1)

But we can surely find a comparable piece of discourse which feels just as impromptu, but which does not contain any grammatical errors. The following sample is from Armistead Maupin's *Tales of the city* (p. 167):

(3) So I gorged myself on pizza canapés and did my best to avoid the guy from Brebner's who once told me I was too average-looking to make it as a model. . . . Christ, Mona, you should have SEEN the beauties in that room! There was so much hair spray they probably had to make an Environmental Impact Report before they could hold the party!

And example (4) is from interactional writing:

(4) My feeling then, when I'm not the "home team", is that it is almost never of any use to do anything but agree with feminists and then secretly indulge in a bout of misogeny afterwards. I don't know if other men are less confused or schizo –

So, there does not seem to be any necessary requirement for grammatical deviance to be present in impromptu speech. However, these examples are nevertheless fragmented in Chafe's sense. Their sentence structure is simple, there are few embeddings, and the relative clause in (2) is identificatory rather than information-bearing; (2) also contains an interjection, and a vocative, etc. And, as we saw in sections 3. and 4., impromptu speech is characteristically manifested linguistically as fragmentation. We should remember, however, that fragmentation is also bound to the situational variables of context-of-situation, medium, and topic. That is, fragmentation has different structural realizations depending on the values of these situational variables.

But what about syntactic deviance? If it is not necessary for impromptuness, is it a sufficient requirement? Hardly: the concord error in (5) does not alone suffice to make this utterance look impromptu:

(5) The great number of elephants that used to stroll along the African plains a century ago have steadily decreased in quantity during the first part of this century.

(Note, however, that example (5) further supports our contention that fragmentation is necessary for impromptuness.)

It is true, of course, that grammatical deviance is a relative term. And perhaps there is a way of quantifying deviance and saying that we need a certain amount of grammatical deviance in a text for it to qualify as impromptu.

What is at stake here, however, is not deviance quantity, but deviance quality. That is, it is still feasible to conceive of impromptu as deviance of some form, even though it is not necessarily grammatical deviance. What I would like to suggest, on the basis of the examples above, is that impromptu speech deviates from the Gricean maxims. And in particular, impromptu speech breaks the maxims of MANNER and/or QUANTITY (it is difficult to draw any sharp line between these two, since the maxim of quantity can be subsumed under the maxim of manner): excessive use of words, use of slang expressions, indirectness of expression, obscurity with respect to coreference, and in general, breaches against being perspicuous – in the Gricean sense of 'perspicuous'. A consequence of this view is that the majority of discourse types will be impromptu to some extent – and we notice again that the Gricean maxims have a very non-interactive character.

We should keep in mind, that is, that we have now moved over to the pragmatic or interactive system of impromptu speech (cf. 1. and 3.); to a system which has rules of its own. The only reason why concepts like deviance cannot be thrown out from the discussion at this point is simply that we have as yet no accepted linguistic tools except those that have explicitly been made for the description of non-impromptu speech.

To sum up the discussion in this sub-section: impromptu speech is fragmented and violates the Gricean maxims.

5.2. The other premise of the syllogism put forth at the beginning of this section was that pragmatic particles create fragmentation and deviance.

It is obvious, of course, that pragmatic particles do not form structural constituents with other words in the same way as, say, an attributive adjective may form a constituent with a noun. When pragmatic particles occur initially or finally in an utterance, this is less of a problem, since we can then argue that the particle forms a constituent with the whole sentence. Pragmatic particles, however, do not occur only utterance-initially or -finally. In (6) *you know* can occur in all the haloed positions:

(6) ○ I'm ○ closing ○ the ○ window ○ .

and thus there will be difficulties if we want to assign a head-modifier status to any relationship that *you know* might be argued to partake in.[12] (On the other hand, there are differences of cooccurrence between *you know* and different kinds of speech acts; in imperatives, for instance, *you know* is not as easily employed, cf.

(7) * Close * the ○ window * !

but again, this is connected with deep-functional reasons.)

The following example is adapted from James 1973. Here *you know* does not partake in the constituent structure of (8) in the same way as the other words or constituents of the sentence do:

(8) The linguist who said he liked, you know, Chomsky got fired.

you know refers not to *Chomsky got fired*, but, despite its position, and cutting across the surface-constituent structure rules of the sentence, it refers to *Chomsky* only.[13]

Thus, it should be fairly clear that from a surface-syntactic point of view pragmatic particles often create fragmentation. Example (9) is from Cyra McFadden's *The serial* (p. 144), and illustrates the use of pragmatic particles in writing.

(9) . . . "How come you get all the wheels around here, anyway? I mean, I've got rights, too, you know." . . . "Yeah, sure", Harvey said. "Hey, listen, so do I. I have the right not to eat this goddamn granola every morning. Like, I'm a carnivore, you know? . . .

But, for our implication to hold, we also need to discuss whether pragmatic particles create deviance from the Gricean maxims. To do this, we need to look at pragmatic particles from a psychological perspective.

We know that the kind of grammatical deviance and fragmentation displayed in (9) does not markedly obstruct the addressee's interpretation process of the particular message in its particular context. Paradoxically, perhaps, it

rather facilitates the verbal interaction between speaker and addressee. The pragmatic particles function in impromptu speech in a parallel fashion to function words in non-impromptu, expository-prose like speech: they make clear for the addressee the intended relation between the content units of the speaker's message – even to the extent that they may override the grammatical rules (cf., again, section 3.) –; and they do this both cognitively (from the speaker's point of view) and interactively (by demanding feedback from the addressee). Thus, impromptu speech will, for perceptual reasons, be organized into relatively short segments, and it will show abundant redundancy whenever this is interactively necessary.

So, if we look at the use of pragmatic particles from a cognitive point of view, it is not the case that the fragmentation and grammatical deviance created by pragmatic particles also create unintelligibility; it is rather the other way round, viz., that the grammatical make-up of an utterance can create the interactive necessity for a pragmatic particle. In this sense the pragmatic particles COUNTERBALANCE the interactive deviance that would otherwise result.

In practice this works as follows. If a Griceanly appropriate sentence – in the midst of being produced – is found by its speaker to be either wrongly planned, or if it does not ascribe to the proper level of politeness, a pragmatic particle can be used to implicitly transmit what the speaker really wanted to say. And in this sense the pragmatic particles can make sure that the utterance is interpreted (or at least interpretable) in the way the speaker intended it to be.

Thus, if example (8) had been produced without *you know*, it might have been too straightforward, and implied that the addressee lacks this knowledge (i.e. the propositional content of the clause subordinated under *said*) and that he needs to be informed about it. By inserting *you know* the speaker not only implicitly takes the addressee and his knowledge into account, he also manages to communicate the social relation he wishes to create or maintain with the addressee, and he indicates why he, the speaker himself, did not feel confident in producing a Gricean proposition in the first place. (For a detailed discussion of *you know*, see Östman 1981.)

In effect, what this means is that pragmatic particles show up as violators of the Gricean maxims.[14] And here, then, is the final link to impromptu speech. On this basis we can now add the following refinement to our initial implicational statement:

1. Pragmatic particles imply – by creating fragmentation, and deviance from the Gricean Cooperative Principle – impromptu.

That is, the occurrence of pragmatic particles in a discourse turns out to be a sufficient condition for regarding that discourse as having a high degree of impromptuness.

*

It is also worth pointing out explicitly that the discussion above is not only applicable to spoken discourse. The need to qualify our communicative acts is present not only in speaking but just as much in writing – perhaps even more so, since in the latter one's audience is largely unknown, and can be manifold. It is true, however, that we do not often find sentences with *you know*s and *I mean*s in, say, scientific texts.

Still, our definition of impromptu speech and impromptuness as such readily admits the implicational relation of I. as applicable also to written discourse. For instance, the occurrence of *well* in (10) implies that this particular discourse has a high degree of impromptuness in relation to other discourses with the same situational-variable values. (The extract is from H.W. Armstrong, *The plain truth about Christmas*, p. 7.)

(10) We were born into a world filled with customs, we grew up accepting them without questions. Why? Sheep instinct? Well, not exactly, . . .

And it is worth stressing that difference in medium (and/or context-of-situation, and/or topic) alone is not a sufficient variable for determining the occurrence or non-occurrence of pragmatic particles.

However, certain secondary differences do emerge with respect to these issues between speaking and writing. First, we can briefly note that the aspect of indirectness (cf. 4.) is the main cause for using hedges in writing, since planning is not a major problem, especially not in expository types of writing.

Another important observation is that the hedges and pragmatic qualifiers that we use in the written medium usually take a different form from those in speech. But accepting a potential difference in surface form, it has been

found (Chafe 1981) that there occurs about the same number of hedges and (what Chafe calls) EVIDENTIALS in written language as in spoken language. The kinds of hedges that occur in written records range from expressions like *I think, I suspect*, to longer ones like *generally speaking*, and they can even take the form of whole sentences. To oversimplify (that is one too), we can say that the verbal material in a sentence that does not add anything to the propositional content of that sentence[15] should be particularly paid attention to from the point of view of pragmatics, and here we will find parallels to the pragmatic particles. The present paper is probably as good a source for examples as any written record, but for the sake of objectivity, let me illustrate my point with the italicized expressions in an extract from John Lyons's *Semantics* (p. 512):

(11) Conventional dictionaries are *essentially* lists of *what might be called* lexical entries. . . . The conventional dictionary *can, for our purposes, be thought of* as an unordered set of lexical entries, . . . *We should not forget*, however, *as linguists*, that *most* adult native speakers of English are accustomed to thinking of word-forms as *relatively* stable written entries . . .

(Perhaps *conventional, however*, and *are accustomed to* should also have been italicized; but cf. fn. 15.)

We notice, then, that pragmatic qualifiers are extremely frequent in writing too, but although their function may be similar (cf. 2.2.), they very often do not have the same form as the pragmatic particles. Nor do they fulfil the sole-function criterion that was introduced in 2.3.

The reason why pragmatic particles do not turn up in expository prose more often than they in fact do is that the reasons for using them are lacking. Rather, over the years, some words and expressions have been stigmatized through negative connotations (for whatever reasons). This is what has happened to the pragmatic particles, and this is why we try not to use *you know, I guess, I mean*, and *like* in expository prose. So, when we say that the use of pragmatic particles implies impromptu discourse, this is a necessary consequence of the associations and connotations that these particles give birth to.

5.3. In sections 5.1. and 5.2. it has been shown that the presence of pragmatic particles implies that the discourse has a high value of impromptuness. The implicational relation could also be turned around, and we could ask, not whether impromptu speech implies the presence of pragmatic particles, since obviously we want to be able to regard a discourse, or piece of discourse, as impromptu independent of whether it contains pragmatic particles; but we could with good reason ask a question with weaker implications, viz., 'Does impromptu speech favour the use of pragmatic particles?'

Again, I think the answer has to be in the affirmative. The question could be answered in two steps:

A.a. Impromptu speech implies the presence of a specific, let us call it unplanned, social situation, where interpersonal relations are in focus, and where it is possible and even at times desirable to (implicitly or explicitly) express one's attitudes to the addressee/audience, and even question (again implicitly or explicitly) the existing status of the interpersonal relations as such (cf. 4.3.).

b. Interpersonal relations and attitudes are prototypically acknowledged and expressed in an implicit manner (cf. the discussion of implicit anchorage in 2.2.).

B. Appropriate means for expressing and acknowledging interpersonal relations include the use of pragmatic particles in one's discourse (cf. section 2.).

That is, impromptuness does not force the use of pragmatic particles in discourse, but it supplies a necessary fertile ground, which in turn creates a predisposition in the pragmatic particles to occur in, precisely, impromptu speech.

6. A symbiosis.

6.1. In the preceding section I showed that there exists a very intricate relationship between pragmatic particles and impromptu speech, despite the fact that – as was shown in 2. and 3. – neither one is necessarily dependent for its definition and characterization on the other.

Using an 'interactional' model from another science, I would like to characterize this kind of relationship as SYMBIOTIC.

The linguistic issues dealt with here do perhaps not form a complete parallel to the biological sense of symbiosis. But I think it is close enough to justify the metaphorical extension.[16] The two organisms (i.e., pragmatic particles and impromptu speech) are of a different 'kind', and they do seem to thrive on each other. (So we cannot talk about a simple one-way parasitic relationship in either direction, but a mutual one.) They do not, however, depend for their existence on each other to the same extent as a biological symbiosis would demand. On the other hand, they compensate for this by having what I have characterized as a mutual cause, or a common root.

The common root gets interactively realized as follows: impromptu speech facilitates social interaction; and pragmatic particles constitute the main phenomena that facilitate, and in some cases even make possible, the interpretation and understanding of impromptu speech.

6.2. Finally, I would like to return to the question I dealt with in section 1. regarding the task of pragmatic particles in language. In particular: 'What does the present discussion imply vis-à-vis the future study of pragmatic particles?' Two things stand out.

a. We should strive towards getting away from superficial characterizations of pragmatic particles. In particular, pragmatic particles are not ultimately definable in the same terms as structural parts of speech (whether clausal or textual). Furthermore, it is not enough to characterize pragmatic particles as occurring in spoken rather than in written discourse. (This does not mean that we cannot say that they have a tendency to occur in spoken impromptu discourse – but as it stands, this is a secondary-level characterization.[17])

b. Although aspects of planning play an important role as socio-psychological causes for the use of pragmatic particles, for most pragmatic particles they do so only in a shallow sense; that is, as a general characterization of the pragmatic particles as a group. The majority of pragmatic particles, even most of those that do have some aspect of planning as their interactive cause, require for their characterization some reference to the area of what

I have here called politeness, including notions like reciprocity and empathy. That is, politeness aspects can give specific characterizations vis-à-vis the internal differences among the pragmatic particles.

FOOTNOTES

[1] This section relies heavily on a number of previous articles and discussions, in particular Östman 1979, 1981, and MS1. I have retained the conventional spellings of what I consider to be pragmatic particles in English. Despite the formal, STRUCTURAL differences between *you know* and *like* (according to which only the latter would be a 'particle'), both are PRAGMATIC particles. Alternatively, we could use *y'know* or *'know* (for *you know*), *a-mean* and *a-guess* (for *I mean* and *I guess*, respectively), and *a-s'pose* (for the epistemic, peripheral pragmatic particle *I suppose*).

[2] It is true, however, that the classes set up by the ethnomethodologists can have members with very different formal characteristics. These classes can, of course, be defined in relational terms, like subject and object in clause-level grammar. Such categories are nevertheless structural in the same way as the categories of, say, relational grammar are structural.

[3] This section is an attempt to reconciliate and/or reinterpret the symposium discussion on impromptu speech with my own views, which are largely influenced by research by Robin T. Lakoff, and Wallace L. Chafe.

[4] Of course, as with all communication, the actual on-the-spot creation process relies heavily on already existing frames, and often makes excessive use of formulaic, set phrases.

[5] In this paper the terms 'planning' and 'planned' will, however, be reserved for a slightly different phenomenon; cf. section 4.

[6] In Östman MS2 I have questioned the appropriateness of choosing these discourse types as prototypical instances; especially so the letter type of discourse.

[7] The distinction between style and register that I have in mind here is that between register as the range of idiolectal variation, and style as a (for historical reasons) socially accepted 'norm' for any such variation with respect to the particular situation at hand. (Cf. e.g. Chapman 1973.)

[8] Robin Lakoff uses only +/- features in her diagrams. It should be pointed out, however, that aspects of a variable are, rather, present to a certain degree, where plus and minus themselves are end-points on a gradience. The following kind of Osgoodian profile representation would probably come closer to being an adequate schematic illustration.

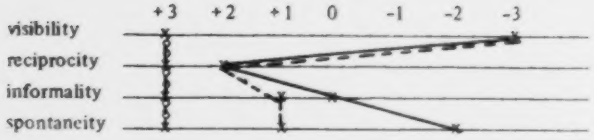

Fig. i.

Key: oral dyad:
telephone conversation:
letter:

Both the feature make-up and the profile nevertheless represent the characteristics of a **PROTOTYPICAL** discourse type: a prototypical oral dyad, a prototypical telephone conversation, etc.

[9] False starts, and certain kinds of repetitions can be regarded as retrospective planning.

[10] The characterization of clarity and camaraderie is here taken to its extreme. Such extreme situations hardly ever occur in ordinary conversation, nor in other types of discourse.

[11] It may be, of course, that this feeling of impromptu is the result of a conscious, insincere effort on the part of the speaker.

[12] Even a deep-structure description will have difficulties here. Firstly, many scholars regard pragmatic particles not as utterance modifiers, but as predicate modifiers. Secondly, as I have argued in Östman 1978, the kind of utterance qualification that pragmatic particles create is on yet a higher level than performatives. Actually, if it were not for the unusualness of the particular turn of phrase, we could say that pragmatic particles form constituents with aspects of the speaker. Cf. here Kriwonossow's (1977) argument that morphemes on the morphological level and particles on the syntactic level have the same function, only, the former relationship is synthetic, the latter analytic.

[13] The notion of **REFERRING** with respect to pragmatic particles is here used in the sense of James 1973. Briefly, an element is syntactically referred to when it is picked out as being the speaker's immediate reason for using a 'hesitation marker'. This is a purely structural and sentential notion, which should be kept separate from the utterance-qualifying function of *you know* in (8). Cf. also fn. 12.

[14] Actually, syntactic deviance can be seen as an instance of a violation of Grice's maxim of manner.

[15] This does not mean that I think there is a discrete line between propositional-content and interpersonal communication. There is not!

[16] Actually, a better metaphor would be to talk about pragmatic particles and impromptu speech as mutual EPIPHYTES: plants that grow on other plants without deriving nutrition, but only support from each other.

[17] Such characterizations are comparable to connotations that lexemes carry on top of their lexical meaning – and, as we know, time and again such secondary aspects of meaning can take precedence over the primary ones, and the meaning of the word in question will change accordingly – with time.

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